Interview with Thomas S. Estes

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR THOMAS S. ESTES

Interviewed by: Dwight Dickinson

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This is an interview with The Honorable Thomas S. Estes, a Career Foreign Service Officer and former United States Ambassador to the Republic of Upper Volta. Dwight Dickinson is doing the interviewing which is taking place in Newport, Rhode Island on May 11, 1988 on behalf of The Association for Diplomatic Studies.

Q: Tom, did you tell me you have a general statement that you'd like to make on this subject?

ESTES: Yes, Dwight, I would. Its directed toward the younger officers—primarily those still in training—and I suppose comes about from my preparing for this interview. In retrospect I believe there was a common thread or philosophy that marked my Foreign Service career and that was decision making. We hear a lot about it in today's management seminars but back in the early ''30s when I came in I don't think I ever heard those words mentioned. Certainly I was never told about, or heard about that subject in the Foreign Service. Perhaps it was something that I took for granted having served in the Marine Corps. Officers and non-commissioned officers made decisions and the rest of us carried out those decisions. When I was commissioned as a Foreign Service Officer, I simply assumed that I should make decisions within the limits of my authority, or when I couldn't

refer a matter to higher authority within the existing time element. I followed this philosophy as a junior officer when issuing visas, of course, as every officer who issues visas does today. As a temporary naturalization officer during the war and as Deputy Assistant Secretary and finally as Ambassador, I made some bad decisions I'm sure, along with what I hope were good ones.

But at least I went ahead and acted, and I only hope that younger officers today are being trained to be able and willing to take risks, if necessary, to make a decision when its called for. This is probably the case because now we have the threshold and officers must have management experience to reach the upper levels of the Foreign Service. I've always felt strongly that officers should be involved in the executive and the administrative management in the Foreign Service.

Back in 1952 I wrote an article on that subject which was published in the Foreign Service Journal, in March of that year, and I may add it was published over the objections of some senior officers who thought that Foreign Service Officers shouldn't be involved in administration. Today, of course as I said, we have an entirely different situation. I was happy to see that the Foreign Service Institute was using my article as collateral reading for officers in training. We've come a long way in twenty or thirty years with officers involved in management where, of course, one has to make decisions and abide by them. I think that's all I want to say.

Q: Tom, I didn't know you then, although we've known each other for many years in the Foreign Service, but I've always been fascinated by your stories of how you happened to get into the Foreign Service. Would you repeat them now? I think they're very interesting and instructive.

ESTES: All right. How I “happened” to get into the Foreign Service is exactly the right word.

I was in the Marine Corps and assigned to the Embassy in Peking as part of the Marine Guard detachment that had been there as a result of the Boxer Rebellion. When the Japanese army occupied Peking I was sent over to the embassy to report to Cecil Lyon, then Third Secretary and later to become an Ambassador, to assist in getting the missionaries and the retired American personnel into the Marine compound for safety.

Q: Tom, excuse me. You haven't given us any dates on this.

ESTES: I arrived in Peking July 1937 and the city was occupied, I think in August, and we probably had the concentration of Americans in our compound through the next month or so. So the time I'm talking about is fairly late in 1937, let's say October-November. We had brought all the Americans in and protected them. When things settled down they all went back to their homes. Cecil Lyon and I were finishing up one day in the Embassy and he said, “Estes, how would you like to join the Foreign Service?” I said, “I'd like to very much, sir. What is it?” He explained it to me and I decided I liked that better than being a private in the Marine Corps, even though I was sure I would pass my examinations for second lieutenant sometime. But a bird-in- hand was worth two in the bush. So on January 7th, 1938 I was sworn into the Foreign Service—or maybe it was the 6th— at the Embassy and assigned as a clerk in the American Legation in Bangkok. I will reveal a secret of half a century now. As a matter of fact I was sworn into the Foreign Service the day before I was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps. I expect that someday before I die I will get a notice from the General Accounting Office telling me to pay back one day's pay from the Marine Corps. Actually the Foreign Service pay didn't start until I got on the boat for Bangkok. Well, there's the secret.

Q: Tom, you went to Bangkok and you've told us who suggested you get in the Foreign Service, but you haven't reported your travails, what you went through to get in.

ESTES: Well, I had a wonderful Chief of Mission in Bangkok, Edwin L. Neville, who had been a Japanese language officer. He and his wife encouraged me to study for the

Foreign Service examinations. I, of course, had an interest in doing so because I didn't propose to stay all my life as a clerk in the Foreign Service. I was a court stenographer in the Marine Corps so I was qualified for that work elsewhere. Mr. Neville also encouraged me by giving a draft for $500 on his bank in the United States. Back then one had to take the oral examinations in Washington and he knew I would need money to get there and back if I passed the written exams. His loan—in advance—gave me an added incentive to study hard, particularly since at that time I had not attended college (I earned my degree after I retired). I shall never forget the moral and financial support given me by the Minister and his wife, Betsy Neville. Our first daughter is named after her.

I failed the old three-and-a-half day exams the first time I took them but tried again a year later just before Pearl Harbor. I didn't find out that I passed until August of the following year when I reported in to the Department after being repatriated. We had been interned by the Japanese Army in the Legation from Pearl Harbor—a few days after— until the following July.

Q: Tom, I know that after Bangkok, after you'd been repatriated, that you were assigned to the Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers. Of course, it was wartime and they were sort of keeping you around the military, weren't they?

ESTES: I think you're right. If I may go back one moment to Bangkok simply because we'll come to it a little later in its proper context. When the Japanese occupied Thailand or Siam—as it was called then—a platoon of Japanese troops that had fought their way ashore a couple days before showed up at the gate of the Legation. Minister Wyllis Peck, the Chief of Mission, sent me out to the gate to find out what they wanted. What they wanted was in. Of course, I knew all about diplomatic immunity and gave them the sign that “no they couldn't come in.” The Japanese lieutenant in charge of the platoon was well trained, he just stepped aside and barked out an order. As a former Marine, I was very, very familiar with the sound of cartridges going into the chamber of a rifle. The rifles were then leveled at my belt buckle. It was at that point I made my first, I guess, real decision in

the Foreign Service on my own authority, to open the gates. They came in and I got beside the lieutenant and escorted him up the driveway to where the Minister was standing at the entrance to the Legation. Fortunately, the Minister, who had been born in China, could read, write and speak Chinese, and he and the Japanese lieutenant communicated with each other by making character signs on the palms of their hands. It was quite a thing to watch.

Now, coming back to Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers, yes, I suppose I may have been picked for that with my background in the Marine Corps and the internment, or maybe it was just because I was available at the moment. I had been working in the Special War Problems Division which I often thought had been organized so the Department wouldn't be bothered with the war. That didn't last long and I was off to Algiers. It was there, incidentally, that I was commissioned an FSO, having passed the oral examination while in the Department. Allied Force Headquarters, of course, was a totally military organization with no previous experience in dealing with a civilian section (We became known as POLAD—Political Adviser). Fortunately, Ambassador Robert Murphy was General Eisenhower's political adviser and he arranged for us to have places to live and to draw rations. If you want me to go on with this a bit...

Q: Yes, tell us something about...

ESTES: In Algiers we were bombed by the Germans and the Italians. In Bangkok we'd been bombed by the British—a unique experience, being bombed by both sides. I shared an apartment with J. Holbrook Chapman, an FSO who had been my immediate supervisor in Bangkok, and at night during an air raid we would get up and go to a shelter across the street. Aside from these raids it was fairly routine work for me as the junior officer. As you can recall, the junior officer did all the administrative work in those days.

But one day the Department requested that an officer be assigned to special duty as a naturalization officer for the US Immigration & Naturalization Service. Ambassador

Murphy assigned me to the job. The reason for this special duty was that a large number of personnel in the military services were not American citizens. They thought they had become citizens through their parents naturalization or some other process but after they entered the military services it was found that they were not citizens. They were supposed to have been naturalized while still in the United States and most were but some were sent overseas without their citizenship. The military authorities didn't want them going into combat unless they were citizens so this special procedure was established. There was particular concern for German-Jewish young men who might suffer if they were taken prisoner by the German forces. It was thought that US citizenship would protect them—though that was questionable.

I was instructed on the procedure for naturalization—a simplified procedure. All that was required was legal entry into the United States—dates, time and place of entry or evidence of naturalization through their parents—date, time and place; verification would come later. I had a stack of serially numbered naturalization certificates and a small hand-press seal. After examining a candidate for naturalization and finding him or her qualified, I was to swear him or her in as an American citizen, fill out the certificate and press it with the little seal.

I remember one candidate very well. I was conducting [x]examinations in Naples right after its liberation when a group of soldiers right off the firing line was brought in by a lieutenant. They were all covered with mud, unshaven and dead tired. The first few candidates went through like a breeze and then one soldier, a little older than the rest and speaking with a German accent, stood in front of me. In answer to my question about legal entry he said he had jumped ship in New York! That did it. I could not naturalize him because he entered the country illegally. The lieutenant began pounding on me saying that here was a soldier ready to die for our country but I wouldn't make him a citizen, etc., etc. I said I was sorry but I had to follow instructions. However, in looking over his record I saw that he had enlisted in the Army before the war and had served in Alaska. I asked him how he returned to the US mainland from Alaska and he told me the name of the Army transport in which

he returned and landed at San Francisco on such and such a date. I swore him in as a citizen and filled out the certificate with that information. If he survived the war someone in the Immigration and Naturalization Service could figure it out. If he died, he died an American citizen. That was an easy decision and, I think, the right one.

Shortly after that, General Mark Clark, the commander of US forces in Italy, sent word that there were some 100 GIs (soldiers) and one Army nurse on Anzio Beachhead who had not been naturalized. Would the examiner be willing to go to the beachhead to naturalize them? They could not be withdrawn from there. I said I would go. That was another decision that had some effect on my career later on.

Q: The beachhead, Tom, you're talking about the Anzio Beachhead when it was under fire?

ESTES: Yes, our allied forces had landed but they weren't getting very far beyond the beach at that time. The Army put me into a makeshift uniform so I wouldn't get shot as a spy if I should be captured. After a rough trip in a landing craft we arrived at the beachhead—and a shell landed on the deck just over my bunk where I was getting my gear together. Fortunately, it didn't explode. This was in March or April 1944.

I examined and naturalized around 110 men in a dug-out that was supposed to be in a recreation area but was only out of rifle range, in the headquarters building—an old castle — and in what had been the post office with artillery shells whirring overhead—plus one nurse in her tent. I soon ran out of the printed certificates so I typed up one on an Army typewriter and reproduced it. Dwight, for something like two or three years afterward I would receive retyped regular certificates for my signature to replace those I typed up on Anzio. They were for the ones who survived the war. Not many.

Several months later the Army awarded me the Bronze Star with a White House citation signed by President Truman. I heard it was one of six Bronze Stars awarded to civilians.

Q: Well, Tom, it was more than an interesting experience, it was no doubt hair-raising but it was also unique, and it demonstrates what a Foreign Service Officer may be called upon to do. One question I had when you were telling about that, did you get authority from Washington to put on this military uniform and go up there?

ESTES: Heavens no, heavens no! One of the things I learned early on in the Marine Corps which I followed all my life was that if you ask stupid questions you get stupid answers—certainly not the one you want. I reported the whole affair when I got back to Naples to Sam Reber, the deputy to Ambassador Murphy in charge of our forward office. He sent a hand-written letter to Ambassador Murphy recommending some form of recognition for what I had done, which Ambassador Murphy strongly endorsed. In due course the Department awarded me our Bronze Medal.

Q: Tom, well that's an example of one of the decisions you've made that you were talking about in your introduction. Would you care to give us some other examples of decisions that you felt were important to make, and that you did make?

ESTES: Well, after Mussolini was killed by the Partisans, the Axis diplomats assigned to his government were interned by the Army in a posh hotel—at a health spa—in northern Italy. I was sent there to check on how they were being treated and to report to the Department in case of complaints or inquiries from the governments these diplomats represented. They were being given first class treatment— far better than I was treated when I was interned in Siam. At one point I was talking to some of the diplomats in the lobby and the Japanese Ambassador, who was standing apart, asked the US Army officer in charge to arrange a private meeting between him—the Ambassador—and me. I declined to do so. Partly it was because I had no instruction to conduct private meetings, but in retrospect it was mostly a bit of petty revenge for the way I had been treated during six months' internment. It was not one of my better decisions.

Q: At one point, and I know you feel very strongly about this, you began to get into administrative work and I know its your view, partly from your original statement, that it is perhaps essential for a Foreign Service Officer of high rank that he should have some general administrative and executive experience.

ESTES: I did. I felt very strongly about it. Perhaps as a result of that I was the first Foreign Service Officer sent to the Harvard Business School's advanced management course.

Q: What year was that?

ESTES: '51, yes, January to March '51. I was instructed to advise the Department after finishing the course whether it should send other Foreign Service Officers there. It was a fascinating assignment and I did recommend that other FSOs attend that course. Leaders of business and industry attended it and that was one of the valuable aspects of the course.

As a result of that assignment I was sent to Athens as First Secretary of Embassy and Director of the Joint Administrative Services. Ambassador John Peurifoy was the first ambassador to be made a Chief of Combined Missions by President Truman. He had been given that title because the former ambassador and the former chief of the economic mission were not on speaking terms. Consequently, their staffs found it difficult to help Greece recover—which was the reason for our being there. The British had to give up. In addition to the Embassy and the economic mission, we had the Army, the Navy, and any number of civilian agencies. The Joint Administrative Services provided support for all the civilian agencies in Greece and certain support services for the military agencies. We had a couple of airplanes, motor boats, some 1200 vehicles, a check cashing operation (we began payment of salaries by check), gasoline sales— whatever it took to give needed support to the substantive agencies working to restore the economic viability of Greece. JAS was something like a major industry.

Obviously, a lot of decisions had to be made. One of the most critical for me did not concern our operation but rather the reaction of a newly-designated Assistant Secretary of State for Administration in the Eisenhower administration, Isaac W. Carpenter, Jr. He was the head of a major paper company with several plants east of the Mississippi and headquarters in Omaha. He was visiting selected posts with the current Assistant Secretary, Tom Wailes, an old friend of mine. Since I was Director of JAS the Ambassador appointed me as escort officer for the visit. Things went along fine until the second or third day when Mr. Carpenter said something about JAS that was not correct—apparently he had misunderstood something in a briefing. I set the facts straight as politely as possible. The next day Mr. Carpenter again made an incorrect statement about our operation and again I gave the correct facts. He turned to me—this was in a rather large meeting—and said, “Do you realize that's the second time you have contradicted me or corrected me in two days?” I replied, “I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary, but I think its my job to provide correct information when you are on a tour like this.” He made no response but I sensed he was not used to corrections. He and Tom left the next day and later I reported to the Ambassador on the visit. I said he would probably receive some kind of flack from the new Assistant Secretary because of what I had said. About two weeks later the ambassador called me to his office and told me to sit down. He said, “You were right, I have something from Mr. Carpenter. He wants you to be his deputy and would like me to release you in 24 hours.”

Q: So that's how you got...

ESTES: That's how I got to be Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations.

Q: I'll be darned. I never knew that.

ESTES: It just came to me as I was talking—that job really required a lot of decisions. But first, we set up a whole new organization in the Administrative area. The Budget and Fiscal office was kept the way it was and the Personnel office remained unchanged except for

new leadership. Mr. Carpenter wanted the entire General Services area reorganized and streamlined, which I did, naming it the Operations office—"OPR" that still exists some 36 years later. As I said, the job called for many tough decisions, and one of them may be of interest.

One night I was representing the Department at the annual USIA (US Information Agency) Ball—a black tie affair. About l:00 that morning I received a telephone call requesting that I come to the Crypto Room—the secure area where telegrams are sent and received. Communications was one of the functions of my office. When I arrived the Duty Officer showed me a telegram from our Embassy in Taiwan—we had diplomatic relations with the Republic of China at that time. It reported that a mob had invaded the Embassy during the noon hour and, among other things, had broken through the walls into the code room. That room had a steel door but the walls were just chicken wire, studs and plaster. The code clerks had not locked the several safes containing highly classified code materials when they went home for lunch so the mob tossed everything out the window. All of it had been lying on the Embassy grounds for hours. For all intents and purposes, in my judgment, all of it was compromised—anyone could have picked up pieces of equipment, daily keys to coding, etc. That being the case, I decided to cancel all our classified systems throughout the Far East. A plan we had in those days for just such emergencies was put into effect. Our posts could use a well- known "one-time pad" system until new material could be sent by couriers, who left the next morning. Later that morning Ambassador Loy Henderson, then the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, called me to his office and asked me to tell him what happened the night before. I told him and he said, "Don't you think you could have called me before making that decision?" I said, "Sir, wouldn't you have made the same decision?" He replied, "Yes, I guess I would." And that was the end of it. That decision cost us about $250,000, as I recall the amount, but our classified systems were preserved. Eventually all the scattered Embassy material was recovered, according to its reports, but we would never know if they had been compromised. By changing our

systems we defeated any possible compromise. Security of those systems was part of my responsibility.

I am recording this primarily for the benefit of young Foreign Service Officers who may read this transcript in the hope they will not hesitate to take responsibility, to make necessary decisions when warranted by circumstance.

Q: I think you're absolutely right and you have to have the courage of your convictions. In the Service you're often put into difficult situations and you simply have to do...to act if you think its right, you have to do it, and it almost always turns out to be right.

ESTES: Who knows? According to the reports, all the materials, all the pieces of equipment, were picked up and accounted for, but what if they hadn't? Suppose some had fallen into the wrong hands? So the only thing to do was cancel everything we had in the area.

Q: Absolutely. Well, Tom, did this administrative experience, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations, lead in some way to you being appointed to Upper Volta?

ESTES: Oh, I suppose it must have. I'd been assigned to the Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy—the third one. It is something else now—the Executive Seminar, I think. Mr. Carpenter, my immediate boss, had left the Department but had recommended me for that training before he resigned. I welcomed it because I wanted some kind of training on my record while I was in the Department for the third time. It would be my last chance because I had just been promoted to Class I. Right in the middle of my studies John Jova, who later would be Ambassador to the OAS—Organization of American States, and to Mexico, telephoned me to say that I had to take a French examination. I was outraged. I told him I hadn't been asked to take a test in French since my oral exams. He said, “Tom, don't ask questions, just go take the damn examination.” I did but I was quite upset. I felt that I was being treated like a junior Vice Consul. After I took the exam, Aaron Brown...

Q: You sound upset now!

ESTES: Well, I was. As I said, Aaron Brown, then the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Personnel, called me to his office after I took the exam. He told me that the President had approved my nomination as Ambassador to Upper Volta. I suppose it was at least partly my record as Deputy Assistant Secretary and perhaps my wartime experience that may have led to it. I didn't ask 'how come'—I just expressed my appreciation.

Q: Well, Tom, you were in Upper Volta for five years. I remember thinking that you were the Permanent Ambassador to Upper Volta. How did you happen to stay so long, and how did you find the time, given my belief that our government isn't very interested in West Africa? It should be, but it isn't.

ESTES: I think part of it may have been the close personal relationship I established with the President of Upper Volta, Maurice Yameogo—its first president—and partly the Salk vaccine project—or partly because Upper Volta was anti- communist and usually voted with the United States in the United Nations. It was seated between the US and the USSR in the UN and Ambassador Frederick Guirma used to tell me he was seated between two giants.

As I said, the Salk vaccine project may have been a major factor. The Minister of Health had asked if I could help obtain the new Salk vaccine that prevented measles and smallpox. He wanted to vaccinate the children of Upper Volta. About three out of five children between the ages of 1 and 5 died every year during the “cold” season (November-January when night temperatures went down to 50 degrees F.). They would be weakened by the measles or smallpox and then catch pneumonia or some other fatal illness.

Q: But it also was a Salk?

ESTES: Dr. Salk also developed the polio vaccine and then this one which had been used successfully in the US Naturally, I consulted with the Department which let me know it

would be my decision if the vaccine were to be used in Upper Volta. After consulting with experts from the World Health Organization, who agreed to undertake the project if it were extended to all of Africa, I agreed provided that the teams doing the vaccinations should include Voltaic, French and American Technicians. If the project worked well in Upper Volta, the other African countries would welcome it. I wanted international representation, especially the French. They came and they used the then new air gun. I remember at the ceremony for the vaccination of the first child, President Yameogo said, “America brings the only kind of guns we want in Africa.” About 300,000 children were vaccinated, as I remember it. We had to send for more vaccine. The leftist press called me a poisoner of African babies and wrote that Africa didn't want American poison. We continued the project which proved to be an outstanding success—not a single child who had been vaccinated died during the next cold season. For the first time the government knew how many children there were in the country. It is interesting to recall that a couple of years later Vice President Nixon represented the US at a ceremony in Ghana marking the 2,500,000th Salk vaccination of a child. Nothing was said about that it was Upper Volta that started the program. Today smallpox and measles are almost unheard of anywhere in the world thanks to Dr. Salk—and Upper Volta.

Recalling your comment on another subject about the Republic of China in the United Nations, the story of how Upper Volta came to recognize that country may be of interest. There was no Chinese representation there then—neither mainland China nor Taiwan. But the Republic of China sent a Charge, Mr. Bernard Joei, and in spite of his best efforts, the president would not receive him. The Department instructed me to assist in any way possible to have the president recognize Mr. Joei. Our Fourth of July reception came along about that time and, of course, the diplomatic corps attended, including Mr. Joei, and President Yameogo came. At an appropriate moment when I had the president alone, I asked (innocently) if he had met the Chinese Charge and beckoned to Mr. Joei to join us. The president gave me a dirty look but then he laughed and shook hands with the Charge. A few days later he was officially recognized. It was good for Upper Volta which received

a great deal of aid— rice planters, medical supplies and, I have reason to believe, some direct financial assistance.

Q: Well, Tom, you know something? You and I are old friends, as I said, I think, in my introduction. You've left out an important part of that Salk vaccine story. You didn't just get the vaccine that easily. The most interesting part of that story you've left out.

ESTES: Well, I really didn't have a personal hand in getting it. Once the World Health Organization understood the situation in West Africa based on what could be done in Upper Volta, and that it probably could apply to much of the rest of Africa, there was no problem getting the vaccine. Once I'd made the decision to go for it, the Department backed me up.

Q: But I thought you had to go to President Kennedy. Where did I get that idea? Is that another story?

ESTES: That's another story but it fits in here. At the end of my second home leave, Charlie Darlington and I—Charles Darlington who was Ambassador to Gabon, were waiting for appointments with the President to make our farewell calls. He was very busy, of course, and farewell calls are not a high priority. Finally I proposed a two-for-one, both of us at the same time. This found favor and over we went at 9:00 or 9:15 on the morning of November 21, 1963. We had to wait and I played with John-John, the President's son who recently graduated from college. Eventually we were ushered in and welcomed by the President. He sat in his rocker and we sat on a sofa. He presented me with his photograph which he had inscribed. He asked us to tell him what was happening in our countries and Darlington made a brief report on Gabon. Knowing we only had a half hour or so, I reported briefly on the Salk vaccine project. The President sat right up in his chair and pounded his fist on his thigh and asked very sharply: “Why don't I hear about these things? This is the kind of program I want to know about— the kind of program we should be doing everywhere.” I'm not sure I'm quoting him exactly but that was the idea. I told him I could

only report to the Department and couldn't get my reports from there to the White House. He looked at his watch and said, in effect, that he wanted me to stay in Washington until he returned from a trip to Texas and when he returned he wanted me to give him a full report, telegrams, results, future plans, the whole deal. He was really quite upset. Naturally I said I'd stay. He said he was sorry but he had to leave. A photographer was moving around the Oval Office and I have a photo of that occasion on my study wall. I never expected to see it. I went back to the Department to alert AF (Bureau of African Affairs). Some of them did not seem overly happy about it. That, of course, was the highlight of my entire career—not just my assignment to Upper Volta as Ambassador.

As you may recall, President Johnson asked all Chiefs of Mission to remain on duty and he invited President Yameogo to make the first State Visit of his presidency. That is another story. After that, in my fifth year, there was a coup d'etat instigated by the labor unions. They persuaded the Chief of Staff of the Army who had been a Major in the French Army when I arrived to be president. He rose to that rank from a private. With independence he was made Chief of Staff of the Voltaic Army. We were good friends and got along very well, but I thought it was time to end my mission.

Q: Well, it seems to me that was a long five years. Tom, you haven't mentioned the Peace Corps. As you know, I was in West Africa too, and the Peace Corps was a tremendous asset to us in those small countries as were self-help funds. Did you also have the same experience I had?

ESTES: I did not have the Peace Corps in my country, nor did I have Marine Guards. Having been a Marine, I had enough troubles without having Marine Guards. But I did negotiate the agreement for the Peace Corps to come to Upper Volta before ending my tour. We did, however, have a Peace Corps- operated language school in Ouagadougou where African youths from all the French-speaking West Africa countries came to learn English during a twelve-week summer course. It was a very, very good school and I had a very high opinion of the Peace Corps people.

Dwight, I think we're coming close to the end and I'd just like to say that from Africa I went to the Naval War College as the State Department Adviser to the President and that is why I'm in Rhode Island now. I'm not a native, like you, but I expect to receive my naturalization papers any day. I retired from the Foreign Service voluntarily on December 31, 1969 after 32 years of service, plus three and a half years in the Marines. We never did sell this house in which we expected to live only a couple years. We are glad we didn't.

Q: Thank you, Tom. That's very interesting and thanks for letting me be your interviewer.

ESTES: I appreciate it very much. I can't think of anyone I'd rather have than you.

Q: Thank you.

End of interview